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THE
JESUITS OF BELLEY
IN 1850-51;
OR,
REVELATIONS
OF THE
EX-NOVICE PAUL DE ST. FOL.

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PRICE SIXPENCE.

H. K. LEWIS, GOWER ST. NORTH.

141. d.

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OF THE EX-NOVICE PAUL DE ST. FOI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

AND

EDITED BY THE REV. W. T. GITTENS.

LONDON:  
H. K. LEWIS, 15, GOWER STREET, NORTH.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE greatest of all gifts bestowed by God on his Church, is the gift of Christ ; the possession and enjoyment of which made Paul exclaim, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." And in proportion as the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of Christ extends, so will true happiness and real prosperity. The means of communicating that vast and unspeakable gift to the children of men is the written word of God, and the preaching of the Gospel. The great agent in communicating to the understandings, hearts and consciences of men, is the Holy Spirit of God, who is called the Quickener, the Comforter, the Teacher of all God's people. In the sovereignty of God this blessing may descend without the ordinary means. But generally He makes use of the means which He has in His own wisdom appointed and rendered sacred by His constant use of them, and by which He has wrought wonders on the hearts and



lives of the worst of characters. And wonders He will yet work by the same instrumentality throughout the whole world; for He says "I will work; and who shall let it?" Those who neglect the means God has appointed, do so at the peril of their souls' salvation. Those who despise the means, "reject the counsel of God against themselves." Those who fight against, and corrupt the means, "fight against God," and "do always resist the Holy Ghost,"—do all they can to commit the great transgression, the sin against the Holy Ghost: they bury the poor sinner in darkness and death, securing their own damnation, and the eternal ruin of their deluded victims. This sin is, I believe, the sin of popery.

The following narrative opens up a particular sphere of the popish delusion—reveals the methods employed to entrap the young and unwary into their dens of infamy,—and just gently raises the corner of the curtain to disclose the nameless abominations that are committed within them, under the pretence of superior sanctity, chastity, and poverty. There is no reason to doubt the truth of the narrative. Inquiry respecting the truth of the statements adduced has been instituted, and satisfactory confirmation of their authenticity has in most respectable quarters been given. The present publication is a translation by an English lady, from a pamphlet which she met with in

France, published in Geneva during the past year. It relates not to a remote period, but to the years 1850 and 1851 ; and it may be hoped that its publication in English will be the means of warning all who profess to be Protestants in the least degree, against supposing that the nature of popery is at all changed ; or that the character of the monasteries and convents is at all improved. What they were formerly, that they are now, and will be to the end of their existence : they will fill up the measure of their iniquity and then sink under the wrath of God. There is no doubt but that Romanists will deny the truth of this narrative. Well, let them do so. Then we ask, why those lofty walls—those grated windows—those massive doors, with their bars and bolts ?—why all this secrecy and precaution ? Does virtue and true godliness require all this, either to produce or to preserve it ? Common sense replies, No ! The language of our blessed Lord is, “ Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Deep seclusion is not the place for godliness ; dark cells, scourges and starvation will never produce it. God has appointed his own means for this end and uses them. But if the object be to debase the mind, destroy the conscience and annihilate the affections, demoralize the principles, and brutalize the man, in order to render him a mere automa-

ton, subjected and submissive to the will of a Superior, capable of any black or horrible deed; then these dreadful places, with their miserable cells, torture, starvation, and tyranny, are evidently the most suitable that the most ingenious mind could contrive. What crimes are and have been perpetrated, what tortures are and have been inflicted, and what murders are and have been committed within those diabolical places, the day of judgment only will fully reveal. Now and then some poor victim has succeeded in escaping the deadly danger, and has revealed some of the hidden mysteries which exist in these awful hells of pollution and crime. And as circumstances transpire, calculated to bring these things before the minds of people who are too easily imposed upon, it is to be hoped that Protestants of every name and denomination will take warning, and not be deceived by any species of pretence as to the true character of all such places, and by no means trust the education of their sons or daughters to the hands of those who will, if possible, and as soon as possible, so envelope them in the meshes of their delusions as to deprive them of all natural affection, and thereby rob the parents of their children, and ruin them both body and soul. The enlightenment and conversion of the author of *the narrative* is deeply interesting, and shews the *power and sovereignty* of divine grace under very

peculiar circumstances. His subsequent experience also evinces the comforts and consolations which the Gospel invariably affords the true follower of Christ, when enduring the most severe torture for his Saviour's sake. It is possible many true Protestants may differ from the author of the narrative as to Mary's being the mother of other children after she brought forth her first-born Son : the author does not seem aware that the term Brethren, is, in the Scriptures, often applied to other relatives besides immediate brothers by the same parents. It is possible, perhaps probable, that Mary had more children, or Christ would have been called her *only* Son, instead of her first-born. She would not, however, have been less holy if she had had a dozen more, except in the refinements of popery. Jezebel, when it suited her purpose, could, from the open window of her chamber, hypocritically preach a sermon on morality. 2 Kings, ix. 30, 31.

T. W. GITTENS.

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# THE JESUITS OF BELLEY, &c.

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## CHAP. I.

### ENTRANCE INTO THE CONVENT.

I ENTERED into the Convent of the Brothers of the Holy Family, at Belley, August the 19th, 1850. This step was brought about by a stratagem; I will shew you how.

For more than eight months, I lived at Paris in the College of St. Nicholas. I was "Prefect of Salubrity," having the charge of inspecting the halls, the dormitories, &c. This College, directed by Monseigneur de Berwenger, Roman prelate, is an institution at once classical and industrial. There I was happy. I prayed every evening to the Holy Virgin to give me grace to remain a long time in this house, where my days glided away peacefully, and where I might secure the salvation of my soul. I prayed her also to grant me the friendship of my colleagues, and the confidence of Monseigneur. Side by side with the College is the Convent of the Dominicans. Father Deschamps was our almoner, I took him also for my confessor. I do not know what drew upon me the attention of this man, but he invited me to visit him, and promised to make me acquainted with his Prior General, le Pere

Lacordaire. I often sawt hese reverend gentlemen. They discoursed with me of the dangers and temptations of the world, and of the happiness of a monastic life.

One day Father Deschamps said to me that he believed I was called to a religious life. I reflected on it; and some days afterwards I avowed to him, in confession, that I could never be a Monk,—that the life was too monotonous, and that I felt nothing within me which impelled me to it. He assented, saying if it was not my vocation, I did well.

All this occurred at the approach of the vacation. When it arrived, Father Deschamps proposed to me to take a tour with him into his country, and to visit Bourg, Departement de l'Ain. I accepted his invitation with pleasure. We set out on the 15th August, 1850. After having traversed Moulins, Bourg, Chamberry, we went to pay a visit to the Monks of the Holy Family at Belley.

The Superior, the Reverend Father Gabriel, received us, and at once invited us to pass to the *salle a-manger*. I did not know that Father Deschamps was expected,—therefore this somewhat surprised me.

After dinner we visited the monastery. "What do you think of it?" said Father Gabriel to me. "Very good, Reverend Father," I replied, "everything appears to me very properly conducted. Your Monks have a pious and modest air. If I should ever have a desire to be a Monk, I should certainly solicit from your Excellence the favour of opening to me the doors of this House."

At these words the Superior looked at Father Deschamps. "You see, my Most Reverend Sir, that M,

Girard would be much pleased to be among us." Father Deschamps did not reply. Shortly afterward he detached himself from us, and left me to continue my walk with the Superior, whilst he turned with another Monk towards the opposite end of the walk.

All of a sudden, he cried out, "Monsieur Louis, here is the place of your abode. Endeavour to accustom yourself to it, and become an excellent Monk." Adieu, said he, in departing, adding a hasty blessing.

I thought that he was joking, and continued my conversation with the Superior. However, after an hour, not seeing him return, I asked where he was. "He is gone to Paris," said Father Gabriel, without emotion. I remained stupified. "What," said I, "does Father Deschamps play with me, then? Have I not told him in confession that I had no vocation for a religious life? And does he mock at what I have said to him even in confession? I was happy at Paris, and by his treachery he has induced me to quit it in order to bring me here and leave me in a convent! Oh! it is shameful! What have I done that he should treat me thus? Father, I wish to leave. The Father Superior, with downcast eyes, looked modest, and did not reply.

I took some steps towards the gate. It was closed. I looked at the wall. It was impossible to climb over it.

I then came back to the Superior, and summoned him to cause the doors to be opened, because I wished to go. "Brother," said he, "Art thou brave?" "Yes," said I, "more so than you think for." "Very well, thou hast to do with a man who resembles thee. Do



not take on so. Try to become a Monk, and if thou canst not accustom thyself to this kind of life, I promise to conduct thee to Paris, and to pay thee for the time thou shalt stay amongst us." I thanked him for his offer but declared that I could *never* accustom myself to monastic life, and that I wished to depart.

The Superior said neither no nor yes. He reminded me that Father Deschamps was already far away,—that I could not overtake him,—that a day sooner or later at Paris would not be of any consequence. He begged me not to decide so quickly—to reflect again. "*Night brings counsel;*" said he, "and you are with friends." He took me by the arm, walked with me, flattered me, consoled me, cajoled me, coaxed me. In short he managed so well, that I felt my irritation diminish, all concentrating itself on Father Deschamps; and I consented to wait—to examine.

He then conducted me into the *salon de reception*; and I was perfectly well treated.

For four days I remained an observer, and during this time my effects arrived from Paris. I had not sent for them, but an invisible hand took care of me. In the meantime, the Superior was charming: he redoubled his attentions and good offices. He discoursed of my College, of my occupations, of my journey. He depicted, in glowing colours, all the advantages of the monastic life. Never had any one testified for me so much interest and affection. I might almost say, tenderness. He spoke to me of God, with so much *contrition*; of the salvation of my soul, with so much

love; that I was affected by it, and was ere long induced to believe that all these events were an appeal from God.

On the fifth day, I yielded to the wish of the Superior and consented to try the religious life.

This was the manner in which I made my entrance into the Convent of Belley. The events which followed have unsealed my eyes; and what I then designated, with Father Gabriel, "a call from God," I now stigmatize by the names of intrigue and shameful imposture. The Dominican Deschamps is no better than the Reverend Gabriel; they are two cheats, who, under the mask of piety, understand one another, and I was their dupe.

Behold me, then, a Novice among the Fathers and Brothers of the Holy Family. From this time I shared in their occupations, their exercises,—in a word—their life. I found the *regimen* a little rough, and it was difficult to accommodate myself to it. My heart failed me sometimes from inanition. In the morning, a little soup; at noon, a small quantity of rice, some ounces of bread, a finger of wine, and water at discretion. In the evening, soup with carrots; and for dessert, some nuts. This was on days of abundance, of which there are only three in the week; for the other four are days of fasting. On these they have only dinner; and in the evening, on their knees, they eat a morsel of bread, with a glass of water.

They have just enough meat to keep it in memory. On Wednesday, a bit of beef the size of a nut; and on Sunday, as much bacon. When hunger presses, they

tighten their girdle. This is called "*gagner des trous*" (gaining holes).

The Fathers and the Brothers eat, all together, in the refectory, a large hall, set round with tables. The table of the Superior is at the bottom, near the door of the kitchen. It is raised three feet above that of the Monks. A broad ledge surrounds it, so as to conceal the meats from sight, but the odour always betrays a good dinner.

Each one has his cell. A desk, a chair, a board bearing a matrass, with a coverlet, compose all the furniture. As for the Superiors, they have two cells. One is like ours. Their name is inscribed upon the door, but they do not inhabit it. The other has a good bed, and every thing quite comfortable. It is there they reside, but their name is not upon it. When strangers visit the establishment, they shew the first; nothing is said about the second.

There are but few lessons; and instruction is given, like nourishment, in small doses. "It is enough, and even too much," said the Reverend Superior Gabriel, "to know the four first rules (of Arithmetic) seeing that a Monk has no need to keep accounts." Litanies, Offices, the Psalms in Latin, and the Catholic rites generally, compose nearly the whole of the instruction given. After the evening meditation, at ten o'clock, each Monk enters his cell, takes off the skirt of his cassock and throws himself upon his hard bed. At four o'clock in the morning he gets up, descends to the *hall of the Chapter*, and there on his knees, until *eight he recites his office*—or rather, finishes his

interrupted sleep. Alas! nature will have her rights; and it is not uncommon to see several fall on their noses.

The chief part of the day is passed in exercises of piety. Singings, readings, orisons, prayers, recitation of the rosary, &c.

This was the life to which I served my apprenticeship. At first, it was painful. But nothing daunted me. I followed the rule with an exemplary severity. I sought in all these practices, the peace of my heart, and the salvation of my soul. The Fathers and the Brothers,—all seemed to me to be saints. I endeavoured to resemble them; and succeeded so well, that at the end of a month my superiors gave me no equivocal mark of their approbation. They authorized me to take the Monk's habit, which is not usually granted until after twelve or even eighteen months' sojourn in the convent.

I was profoundly rejoiced; the frock seemed to me the livery of holiness.

It was done with great ceremony. Monseigneur, the Bishop of Belley, came to officiate pontifically in the chapel of the monastery,—clothed me with the cassock, and gave to me my religious name, *Paul de Sainte Foi*. He announced to me that my Superiors destined me for preaching, and said, embracing me: "My Reverend Brother, Paul de Sainte Foi, Prepare yourself to make, next August, a solemn profession of your faith, and to receive minor orders. I prostrated my forehead against the marble, in token of submission, and they reconducted me in procession into the hall of

the chapter. All the Monks, in white surplices, with wax candles in their hands, accompanied us, singing the *Te Deum*. They washed my feet and my hands, and then upon a sign from the Superior, the Fathers and the Brothers bowed, and left us.

I remained alone with the Reverend Gabriel.

\* \* \* \* \*

That tete-a-tete weighs yet upon my heart.

I left him profoundly vexed—and could not restrain my tears.

I became sombre, dreamy, melancholy. Father Gabriel was to me an object of repulsion and of disgust. I avoided his presence; his look was odious to me; but by degrees this impression became less lively. The education of the convent bore its fruits. became like the rest.

However, the bandage had slipped from my eyes.

began to see many things which I had not before observed, and to judge very differently of men and principles. Some words and some facts in regard to this, will not be out of place.

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## CHAP. II.

### EDUCATION IN THE CONVENT.

It seems to me, that when one meddles with education, one ought to have but one end—that of bringing the child to man's estate; and that when he conducts a religious education, he ought to propose to himself, no other end, that of making men *religious*.

Is this what the Reverend Gabriel proposes to himself? Does he wish to make men the subjects of religious principle, and lead a good life? By no means. His only end is to insure the dominion of the priests; and all his religious education is only a means to prepare and to form instruments of domination. His education tends to develope nothing: because to develope an individual,—his faculties, his reason, is to teach him to see with his own eyes and to judge for himself;—it is to lead him to freedom and to independence. The design of the Father Gabriel is, on the contrary, to stupify the individual, to fetter and arrest the development of his faculties, in order to take from him the power of judging with his own eyes, and to hold him in continual dependence. He makes *dead bodies* (*cadavres*,) in conformity with the desire of St. Ignatius Loyola.

This principle is powerfully applied in the education of Monks. They reduce, for them, all the moral virtues—cardinal and theological—to one only, namely,

*obedience* to the Superior. They ask not from a Monk, honesty, reason, piety. They require from him only one thing,—absolute obedience. “He shall know,” say they, “all these other things when he shall be perfectly obedient.” Thus, they teach; they develope in him only one thing; but they develope it well. It is sacred *obedience*;—obedience in every thing, through all and above all; blind obedience, without limit and without control.

Who does not see that it is deeply immoral and diabolical thus to maim a man, and to keep him in perpetual childhood, under pretence of educating him! Who does not see what power it gives the director, the putting into his hands men who are but as soft clay, ready to receive every form and every impression,—beings capable of every thing—yes, of every thing; capable of sacrifices and of devotion, when it shall please the Superior to exact them,—capable also of that which is most shameful and most base, when it shall please the Superior to command it?

• And, frightful to say, all is so well designed, that it succeeds. They supple a man to the point of being able to turn him in and out like a glove, and this is their method. They begin by taking from him his physical strength, and by destroying that energy of the body so intimately allied to that of the soul. They tame him and supple him by hunger as they tame a wild animal. This is the real end of those abstinences and those forced fasts, four times a week, and of the little nourishment which they give on the other days. Later they will restore the strength, when

they shall have secured the mind, and are able to reckon upon a perfect obedience.

Whilst they thus discipline the body and prepare the subject by enfeebling it, they are not idle with respect to the heart. First they pluck the young man from all the ties which attach him to this world, even the most sacred, as those of family and country. There are no exceptions. I cannot write to my parents without a previous reading and authorization of the Superior, and that according to rule once or twice a year at most. I cannot receive any letter; the Superior receives them, reads them, and acquaints me with their contents if he thinks proper, which is very seldom. To think of Father, of Mother, or of those who are next my heart, is a fault, of which I must accuse myself and for which I must do penance. I must forget my country; what passes there never reaches my ears; only to *think* of it is a sin, which may be mortal; I must confess it and be punished for it.\* Thus they empty the heart of all its most natural feelings; they would draw away from a man all remembrance of his past life. They take from me my name. I am called "Louis Girard," *they* call me "Paul de Sainte Foi." They permit me no more to say, "Good day" or, "Good evening," I must say; "Vive Jesus!" "Vive Marie!" The days are designated no more except by the names of Saints.

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\* In fact, of politics, one knows only one thing. Every evening they pray for his Royal Highness, the Duc de Bordeaux, for his reestablishment on the throne of France, and for his partizans. They pray neither for the President nor for the Republic. [This fact was recorded before the President's recent coup d'etat.—Ed.]



They isolate me even from the Brothers who live with me, for it is forbidden for *two* to be together. There must always be three. And accusation is according to rule. Each Brother is a spy upon his Brethren. I have no one to whom to open my heart, or to confide an inward impression—except the Superior. Unless by a power of concealment, very rare, he consummates his ends, whether you will or not, by installing himself master of your inmost soul, and by possessing, sooner or later, your most secret thoughts.

But this is yet but the commencement.—In order to form us to holy obedience, he contradicts all our tastes, —noble or base, good or bad, it matters not. He studies our inclinations, our desires, in order to thwart them. Does a Brother manifest an inclination for one thing? they make him do another. Has he a repugnance for certain occupations? they require them of him. Does he love study? they make him labour. Does he labour with zeal? the Superior orders him to go softly, and not to make so many strokes in a minute. Does he labour slowly? he commands him to go more quickly. This perpetual contradiction, so breaks the character, that at the end of a certain time, the man becomes indifferent to everything; or if his inclination prevails, he becomes a hypocrite. He calculates upon contradiction: he feigns to like what he does not like and not to wish for that which he desires. He appears joyous with that which afflicts him, and afflicted with that which rejoices him. And this is common.

*With this opposition, is connected the debasement of the mind. To cultivate the intellect would be to pre-*

pare men who would judge for themselves. This would be to create an opposition and a power of resistance. So *brutalization* is the order; and they obtain it in the name of the very holy obedience. They brutalize by hours of prayer and singing which fatigue the mind and stupify it. They brutalize by a study which develops nothing, such as committing to memory Psalms in Latin, litanies, &c. or reading the legends of saints and recitals of false miracles. They brutalize by the execution of orders which are absurd and unreasonable. Does a Brother plant cabbages *root* downwards? the Superior orders him to plant them *head* downwards. He makes him dig with the handle of the spade. He orders him to *weed* the walks, and to *rake* the flower borders; he makes him pluck up the *good* plant, and leave the *bad*: he commands him to wipe *three plates and a half*, &c. One would impute these orders to foolish and whimsical caprices, if one did not know that all has a Machiavellian end, that of forming men to obedience, even in those things which appear to our mind absurd and unreasonable.

But this is not all. They take from their victim every feeling of justice and injustice,—of morality and immorality. The moral conscience is a strength, a power in man; for this very reason it is an obstacle which must be overcome. Obedience, to be perfect, must be blind. To this end they do not content themselves with perverting the heart of the novice, by that continued restraint which obliges him to conceal *everything*, and infallibly brings him to *hypocrisy*: they work undeviatingly to their point by means of

demoralization. Under pretence of confession, they unveil to him every crime that the most unbridled imagination could suggest: they preach to him a lax and casuistical morality: they shew him how evil may be done and even ought to be done, for the sake of the good which may result to religion or to the monastery. They excite to evil even by contradiction. Several times Father Gabriel asked me if I had done a thing. I replied, No; and it was true. "You are a liar!" said the Father, and he imposed a penance. But I shall never forget the day, when, wearied with punishment, I lied, and said I *had* done it. His eyes sparkled; in his joy he embraced me, falling into an extasy. I had no penance. In fine, they triumph over the last scruples of conscience by preaching lying and cheating, and in exercising them even in the name of obedience. See, then, how the Reverend Gabriel contrives to annihilate in a man, tastes, sentiments, reason, morality,—all that there is in him, noble, elevated, divine, even to his *will*. He transforms him into the image of the brute so well, that he is in the hands of the Superior but as a docile instrument, ready to execute every thing absurd as well as reasonable, bad as well as good, even to infamy; and that without regret, without repulsion, without remorse, but from religious principle and under the magical authority of *sacred obedience*.

Does any one wish for facts? Here they are. On Fridays, instead of a caution against faults, each Brother accuses himself of the faults which he has com-

mitted, and the others at the end of the relation add their denunciations ! The Father Superior afterwards preaches upon the subject of confession. He unfolds in full Chapter, and before a hundred young men, the most disgraceful vices, declares freely the names, the manner, the aggravating or extenuating circumstances, &c., without asking pardon for the detail. It is his favorite theme, and words flow abundantly.

This is called in the Convent,—teaching morality ! Besides this, in special assemblies, the Reverend Gabriel, proposes questions upon the grave faults which Brothers may commit, at their posts, or in the community, and asks what they ought to do in order to defeat the ends of justice. One day, he took for his text, the affair of the Brother Leotade. He held the journal in his hand, read the act of accusation and at each deposition he stopped saying : “ What would you do if such a thing were to happen to us, in order to save the honour of the Monk and of the community ? ” The Brothers gave their opinion ; and each one displayed the resources which his imagination suggested. It was a contest as to who should lie the most and best. The Father Superior afterwards gave us an exhortation upon the necessity of blind obedience. Instead of stigmatising the conduct of Leotade, and declaring, that if such a thing happened among the Brotherhood, he would himself denounce them at the tribunals, in order that they might receive the punishment due to their crime, and that they well knew that the Order did not tolerate in its ranks such wicked ones ; he on the contrary, took the part of the criminal,

and set forth the means by which they might elude discovery and assure the culprit of impunity. He said that he should immediately assemble the community in order to agree upon their replies, so as not to contradict one another, and that he should then command each one in the name of the very holy obedience to say what he could to save the Monk and let the rest take notice. He shewed that a Monk having made the vow of obedience, did not sin in obeying, but that he sinned in disobeying; that his obedience is an act of humility, and of renunciation, which is meritorious in the sight of God; that he has nothing to disquiet himself about, because that he, (the Superior) takes all upon his conscience. What a conscience! He finished the conference by giving us his blessing. This it appears to me is speaking out, and teaching openly, lying and perjury. I have heard that in London, there are schools where they teach young thieves to steal watches and handkerchiefs. Is the school of the Reverend Gabriel any better? I leave the question to the serious consideration of my readers.

Take, for example, a lesson in cheating.

One day the Reverend Gabriel told the Brother who was cook, to go and get two sous worth of sorrel from Monsieur N——, a very pious man of Belley. Something like the following dialogue took place on the occasion.

*The Brother.* "Sir, will you sell us two sous' worth of sorrel?"

*M. N.* "Yes, my good brother. But how is this? have you not any?"

*The Brother.* "No, Sir, nor any more bread."

*M. N.* "You must buy some."

*The Brother.* "The Reverend Superior says he has not a sou in his chest."

*M. N.* "Oh! what do you say, my poor Brother?"

*The Brother.* "I tell the pure truth."

Upon this, the gentleman fills the brother's basket with sorrel, and vegetables of various kinds, and adds to them four loaves of bread (twelve pounds). An hour afterwards, he is seen to arrive at the convent with a bag containing two thousand francs. He presents it to the Superior, saying, that when he should require it, his purse should be open to him,—that he prays him to dispose of it,—that he should be happy to contribute to the comfort of men so pious,—that, besides, he only follows the advice of his confessor, who has engaged him to make a gift of ten or twelve thousand francs to a religious house. He invites him to go on the morrow to take the rest of the sum, and recommends himself to the prayers of the Holy Brotherhood.

The next day the Confessor and the Reverend Gabriel dined together. The one had suggested the advice, the other had performed the exploit. The game was played; and the good Fathers feasted on the success of it. The story circulated in the convent, and they laughed at it heartily.

Another lesson of the same kind.

When there comes any visitor to the convent, of which they are warned by the first stroke of the bell, the Reverend Gabriel takes care to put all the monks in two ranks, with their foreheads to the ground, to sing th

*Miserere mei Deus.* The person who waits rings again: then a Brother goes to admit the visitor, and salutes him, holding his hands crossed upon his breast. He makes a sign to the strangers to follow him, and conducts them into the presence of the community.

Strangers commonly draw back a step before this spectacle, whilst the Brother goes to resume his place and his posture. They are confused at having interrupted the devotions of these saints; they dare not advance, and listen in silence. Then the Reverend Superior, who, until now, has appeared not to perceive them, deeply engaged as he is in his devotions, raises his eyes a little, looks, acknowledges, rises, and goes to them. He obligingly conducts them to the parlour, and converses with them with a serious and devout air.

Often, the interest which this scene awakens, touches their hearts. They inform themselves of the convent, of the life of the Brothers, of their food, of their resources, &c. The Father sounds the words *poverty* and *charity* on every note of the gamut, and in all the octaves. It is very rare that he does not obtain from charity, gifts the most liberal.

One day when the present was without doubt considerable, he came back with the strangers to the assembly, ordered the monks to rise, and said to them, "Here are our benefactors. Sing to their honour a song of thanksgiving." After their departure, the Superior said to us, "Courage! my children, you have done your duty well; the very holy Virgin will bless you, *and Saint Joseph also.* Courage! a few more like these, *and we shall build a handsome monastery."*

What will doubtless astonish, is to learn that the Reverend Gabriel makes us also contrabandists. Obedience applies itself to everything, even to the making of liars and thieves. Behold the fact, such as it happened in my case.

The only indulgence permitted us is to take snuff. There is in the convent a large vase, in which they put the snuff; each one avails himself of it at his pleasure. When the vase is empty, the Reverend Gabriel says to the monks, "My children, you must go for provision;" and he assigns to each his part. "The Brother *Paul de Sainte Foi*, shall take in his hand the box of holy oils. The Brother *Anselm* shall carry the sack of duty (thus they call a green bag in which they carry the ornaments of the priest when he goes forth to administer extreme unction). Brother *Lucien* shall take the leathern girdle and you shall go to Yenne,\* accompanied by Brother *Vincent*. You must pass the bridge in silence. Brother *Lucien* will pay the toll, and the Brother Director of the house at Yenne will tell you what you are to do."

No sooner said than done. We arrive at Yenne. The Brother Director takes the box of holy oils and fills it with snuff (Virginian, twelve kilogrammes) puts round it a red ribbon, and seals it with the seal of the bishop. He has before him a mass of seals of the different bishops and archbishops of France. Then comes the green bag, and in this he puts six magnificent albs.

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\* Yenne is a village situated on the other side of the Rhone, on the Sardinian frontier.



Never had my eyes seen anything more beautiful. The least valuable must have been worth at least 600 francs. He afterwards fills the leathern girdle with snuff. It is very large, and may hold fifteen kilogrammes. The cassock put on over the girdle conceals everything. Then comes Brother Vincent's turn: they undress him, roll three times round his body, lace from thirty to thirty-five centimetres in width. I look on with astonishment.

The operation performed, the Director gives us his orders, thus: "Some minutes before you reach the bridge, you must intone the *Te Deum*, and pass over singing. You must walk one by one, with head and eyes cast down; nevertheless, you must look aside a little to see if the *douanier* comes to you. In the event of this check presenting itself, Brother Lucien must speak to him, whilst you go forward on your route. If he ask you whence you come in this order and with this equipage, you must reply that you come from discharging your duties to a sick Brother. Indeed, my Brothers, I am not well, and I am going to bed directly. You must tell the Reverend Gabriel that I am not well; and you my Brothers, I thank for this kind visit."

Upon this we set out. Brother Anselm intoned the chaunt near the bridge, and we followed. I walked first, holding devoutly between my hands and resting against my breast the holy box surmounted by its cross, my eyes lowered like all the Brothers. Every person who met us saluted us, making the sign of the cross; *the douanier himself doing it likewise. After so successful a journey, we went to discharge ourselves to the steward of the household.*

According to the direction given us, we told the Reverend Superior that the Brother Director was ill. "Ah! so much the better! so much the better!" said he, at the same time inhaling a good pinch of snuff, "I will send two monks every day to Yeune to bring me back cambric and lace, and all the goods which are there deposited. We will sell them at the cathedral; and we will give some also to the Sisters of St. Joseph, that they may sell them for us."

For eight days the monks went to and fro between Yenne and Belley. The *douaniers* seeing us going and coming so often, asked the reason. They told them that we had been to render the last duties to a sick Brother at Yenne, and that we went every day to inquire after the state of his health!"

This was done every three months, and oftener if the magazine had need of it; for the monastery furnished all the convents in the neighbourhood.

We have seen the education, and I will now shew the fruits of it. The practice corresponds perfectly with the theory. The end is attained. There is no longer any thing in the Monk which opposes itself to the will of the Superior. His reason submits; his morality is extinguished; his inclinations subdued, offer no more resistance; he is supple, docile, fit for every thing. He is *perfect Monk*, for blind and absolute obedience is *perfection*. And this perfect monk—is, nevertheless, in reality, a hypocrite, a liar, a cheat, and a contrabandist. All by the will of the Father Superior, and to the *greater glory of God!*

Can there be in the world a school, more wicked and more shameful than this institution?

## CHAP. III.

### DOUBTS.

SUCH wickedness does not strike one at first sight, because a religious motive is made to conceal this destruction of the religious principle itself. They do not say openly to the Novice, Be a spy upon thy Brothers ; but they interest his conscience to watch for their sanctification ; and there he is, unknown to himself, upon the high road to espionage and accusation. They make him believe that the renunciation of the world requires the sacrifice of all his affections ; and from that time all his efforts tend to make him a son without heart, without love. Under pretext of putting an obstacle to evil, and to arm the monk for confession, they teach him what he ought ever to be ignorant of, and by this infernal science they take from his heart its innocence, and from his imagination its *naivete* and healthiness, and thus by the most skilful and the most perfidious art, they introduce him by degrees into the most detestable courses, and he advances therein in the name of conscience and of religion. He knows not the evil until he has committed it, and has lost the strength to detect it. This is the reason why so many things which I now intensely hate, did not strike me from the very first I *did not discover* either their bearing or their real end. *I did not comprehend* the influence or the wickedness

of the education. Bad as it may be, one does not know how to escape from the atmosphere in which one lives, nor is conscious of its impurity until he has had the happiness to breathe a purer air. I confess to my shame, and above all to that of the Reverend Gabriel, that education, habit, and example, would have rendered every degree of turpitude familiar to me, if God had not enlightened me, and caused to revive in me that moral sense which they endeavoured to stifle and extinguish.

A circumstance quite independent of my will was the cause of it.

They read the New Testament in the refectory. During the repast, eight Brothers ascend, in succession a little tribune, and read aloud a chapter from the Word of God. The first four read in the Gospels, the last four in the Acts or the Epistles.

This reading had never interested me. I had only followed it with distraction. The time is ill chosen to make it relished, for every one knows that "a hungry stomach has no ears."

One day, however, I was struck by the reading of the following passage: *And Joseph knew her not, till she had brought forth her first born son, to whom he gave the name of Jesus.* Matt. i. 25. I had a great veneration for the Holy Virgin. The dogma of her perpetual virginity, was one of the foundations of my faith: and, behold! the Scripture speaks of Jesus as her *first-born*. This surprised me much. I nevertheless repelled this evil idea, by opposing to it the teaching of the Church. I persuaded myself that I had wrongly understood or wrongly heard; and sought, by

redoubling my prayers to the Holy Virgin, to triumph over this impression. Nevertheless, I know not why, this reading had cast something like a shadow over my faith. The more I wished to forget this passage the more it would return to my memory. I was obliged to allow to myself that this book had been written by our holy apostles; that they had lived with Jesus Christ and the Virgin: what they said, therefore, must be the perfect truth.

From this time, I listened with much attention to the reading. I heard things which appeared to me very singular; but the spoon fell from my hand, when, a short time afterwards, a Brother read this passage: *Whilst Jesus yet spoke to the people, his mother and his brethren, stood without desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.*" Matt. xii. 46, 47. All was overthrown within me. This declaration changed my unhappy doubts into certainty, since it spoke of the *Brothers* of the Lord.

From that time I trusted no more to my ears—I must read the Book for myself. To this end I glided, after the repast towards the tribune, and without any one seeing me I took the book and put it into the pocket of my cassock. I then sought solitude. My first care was to find the passage which had upset me. I read it. I read it again; and after having uselessly turned about the sentence, weighing every word, and arguing it to myself, I was obliged to yield to the *evidence, and to acknowledge that the Roman Church spoke not as the apostles; and that it was neces-*

sary to choose between these two alternatives :—to believe, with the Gospel of God and the holy apostles, that Mary had had other children, or, to believe, with Rome, that she had been perpetually a virgin. This alternative was horribly painful. It seemed to me that I did outrage to the Holy Virgin, whom I loved so much. I could not yet resolve to decide, although I felt in my heart that God could not deceive me in his word ; and that to refuse to believe what he said, would be to declare him a liar. I hoped that a greater knowledge of the gospel would perhaps clear up this difficulty and make things harmonious which seemed discordant. I adjourned all decision.

I was awakened, and I could not again sleep. Each day I seized the Holy Book ; and concealed at the bottom of a walk, or retired in the corridors, or shut up in my cell, I instructed myself in the Word of God. I devoured the book. A field was disclosed to me of new ideas and beliefs, as vast as unexpected ; and all quite at variance with those which had been taught me until now.

My doubts increased from day to day. Fasting appeared to me a vain practice, repudiated by that saying of Jesus : *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man.* Matt. xv. 11. I could see also that it is entirely unjust to dispense with fasting for money, and to compel the poor man to abstinence because he is poor. But I remained dumb before that prophecy in which St. Paul foretells that a day will come when impostors full of hypocrisy, shall forbid

*marriage, and the use of meats which God has created to be received with thanksgiving, by the faithful; for all that God has created is good.* 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4. Alas ! thought I, this is exactly what we do. This passage led me to say on a subsequent occasion, to the great scandal of the whole community, that I should not think "I sinned in eating meat on Holy Friday."

I doubted of the propriety of those perpetual repetitions of litanies, and of the rosary, when reading what Jesus said : *Do not affect to speak much in your prayers, or as I afterwards read in other versions: Use no vain repetitions, as the heathen do, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking.* Matt. vi. 7.

Prayers, vespers, and the mass in Latin were, I saw, decidedly condemned by these words of St. Paul : *I would rather say only five words in the Church of which I know the meaning, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue.* 1 Cor xiv. 19.

My astonishment was extreme when I read in the book of the Acts, what St. Peter said to the Jews, speaking of Jesus Christ, that it was *necessary that the heaven should receive him until the time of the restitution of all things.* Acts iii. 21. How then can he be in body and in bone upon the altar ? It is impossible.

As I turned over the leaves of the book, I continually made new discoveries, and went from one surprise to another. This gospel that they had told me was so obscure appeared to me, alas ! only too clear.

I search for the sacrifice of the Mass, and its expiatory virtues. Scripture says not a word of it. It declares, on the contrary, that we are sanctified by the

*oblation* of Christ, once offered. Heb. x. 20. To what purpose, then, the oblation which the Priest makes every day? I search for Limbo and Purgatory: the word of God speaks not of it. I look, in vain, for penances and indulgences. I seek, with no better success, the intercession of the Virgin, of Angels and of Saints. I find nothing: or rather, I read that *there is one Mediator between God and man—Christ Jesus*; and I say to myself, there is then no mediation of the Virgin, nor of Angels, nor of Saints. I seek the *primacy* of St. Peter. I fall upon this declaration of St. Paul, “*I think not myself inferior in any thing to the greatest amongst the Apostles*,” 2 Cor. xi. 5; and on the scene where he withstands St. Peter to the face. Gal. ii, 6—11. I seek the institution of a Vicar of Jesus Christ. I find nothing of the kind.

Then who am I to believe, God or Rome? I become uneasy. Violent doubts assail me. My Roman faith is shaken. In order to believe according to the Church, I must disbelieve in God and his word. I cannot disguise from myself that things essential in the Church of Rome and fundamental in my life as a monk, such as the mass, indulgences, invocation of saints, the intercession of Mary, &c., are not met with in the Gospel, or if spoken of, almost always in a manner contrary to that which had been taught me. What to do? Who to believe? The Church is the Church,—but God is above the Church. Is it not God who is the final judge, and who decides upon my salvation? If I refuse to believe in his word, what shall I say to exculpate myself? Is it not written that *the servant who*



*shall have known the will of his master, and shall not have done it, shall be beaten with many stripes ?*

I was made unhappy by this disagreement between the doctrine of the Church and the teaching of God. I fought with my new ideas in favor of my ancient faith. I endeavoured to make them agree, by recalling to my memory the reasons by which they commonly justify them ; and I argued—but in vain. The contradiction became more and more evident. I could not hinder myself from acknowledging that I had been brought up in error, and that the Church had greatly gone astray from the religion taught by Jesus Christ, and preached and written by the holy Apostles.

Of all these teachings, so new to me, nothing struck me like the doctrine that God saves me *by his grace*, and not on account of any *merit* in my works. This thought has been one of my sweetest consolations, my hope, and the secret of my strength. I had always been solicitous about the salvation of my soul. All is comprised in this. We have only one soul, and after being here below, the best part of ourselves—our soul—is our all at death. In order to secure salvation, I followed the way indicated by my Church, and the orders of my director. I sought to *deserve* heaven and to *gain* it. I endeavoured to be irreproachable in my conduct ; and I added to these efforts, works—meritorious, and supererogatory ; fastings ; macerations ; and prayers, a hundred and a hundred times repeated. I said over my rosary every day, in order *to gain indulgencies*. I kept myself standing, sometimes upon one foot, for hours together, with my arms

crossed, before the image of the Virgin, or before the crucifix. I aspired to gain heaven by my merits.

These practices weakened my body : but my heart remained cold and my mind distracted. I was harassed, stupified. After having gone over two or three rosaries, I was no better for it. The more I strove to gain heaven, the more I felt all that was wanting in me, in order to merit it. I bore within me that principle of sin which tormented me, alienated me from God, and manifested itself continually by distraction in my prayers and coldness in my devotion. I followed scrupulously the prescribed rules : but all these observances did not quicken my soul. I ever felt myself, not a saint, but a sinner. Many times I consulted the other Brothers on their religious sentiments—the ardour of their piety ; and was convinced by their replies that they felt the same languor and the same coldness as myself. All these dead works fatigued them and edified them not. I ended by saying to myself—is there really upon the earth a man who deserves Heaven by his holiness ? Do not the most religious men commit sin in their life ? and, above all, in their heart ? Can he who is not holy flatter himself that he *deserves* eternal happiness ? For myself, I was troubled in my conscience, and peace had fled from my heart.

What was my astonishment, or rather my joy, when the gospel itself came to console and strengthen me ! The gospel said that *there is none righteous, no not one*, Rom. iii. 10 ; and I felt that I indeed was not,—could not, be so. The Lord said that He came to seek and to *save that which was lost* ; and I thought directly, that

He was come to seek and to save *me*,—that He would give me this salvation of which my heart had so great need, to which I could not myself attain, and which I had so earnestly sought of Him. He had given it to Zaccheus, that chief of publicans, in saying to him, *Salvation is come this day to thy house*. He had given it to a penitent Magdalen, saying to her, *Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee*. He had even given it to a thief upon the cross : *I tell thee of a truth that thou shall be with me this day in Paradise*.

My eyes were opened and I understood what had always before been hidden from me, that Salvation is a *gift* which God makes to sinners through Jesus Christ, a pure gift of his love. And my heart bounded towards my Lord ; my love responded to his ; I loved him because he had first loved me and had given his life for me. I put my trust and confidence in him. His immense goodness united me to him by intense gratitude. I felt myself new born ; I read with zeal ; I prayed with fervour. This inward renewing did but increase in me the desire to be holy and irreproachable in my conduct. It is true that it was no longer in the hope of gaining heaven or of deserving it, since my Lord had opened it for me, it was from the ardent desire of not losing it. I worked no more at my salvation from interest, but from gratitude and love. I experienced no more languor. A new strength quickened all my efforts—produced them—multiplied them, for a new mind possessed me, and urged me to *those works which please God*, and by which we glorify *God in our body and in our soul which belong to him*.

I was happy ; full of peace and of joy, I felt myself to live for Christ—for God. God would, without doubt, have finished the work which he had begun in me had my outward circumstances been ever so difficult, but certainly it might have required more time for its consummation had not the cruelty of the Reverend Gabriel come in and hastened to maturity the germ which had been developed.

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## CHAP. IV.

### THE CONFERENCE—CONFESSIONS.

ONE does not overcome so many doubts without passing through much trouble ; and in the spiritual world, peace comes not until after war. The time of combats had not ended, for as I did not even know how my superiors might be able to reply to those truths which appeared to me more and more evident, it was necessary for my tranquillity and satisfaction that I should endeavour to ascertain. Besides, these new thoughts shut up within my heart oppressed it. They wanted to break through the narrow dwelling in which they were confined, to appear in full light. My conscience called for it as a solace and a duty. The occasion presented itself, and I seized it.

There is in the convent a place which they call the *Chapter of Trespasses*. It is a large hall, half lighted, furnished all round with red painted slates. At the end of it is a raised seat, where sits the Superior. A Christ, of the size of life, is above, and on the opposite side is fixed a picture of the Virgin. Here and there are sentences written in black upon the blue wall, such as these :—"Sins must be expiated in this world by penances, or in the other by flames ;" "You will be truly monks when you shall have acquired a blind obedience," &c. They name this hall the Chapter of Trespasses or *Accusations*, because every Friday evening each brother comes there to make confession of his faults in presence

of the assembled community. Here was to be held a conference, that is to say, a reading and explanation of the Holy Scripture by the Father Superior, followed by a declaration of the sentiments of the Brothers upon the same subject. This exposition is very uniform. In this, as in everything else, if one wishes to have the favour and affection of the Superior, one must think as he thinks, and say as he says ; or be prepared for misfortune! Each Brother then repeats, in other terms, the thoughts of the Reverend Gabriel, who pretends that they enter by this submission into the spirit of the holy order, as well as into the spirit and judgment of the very holy Roman Catholic Church. I resolved to declare my doubts openly in conference, in order to hear the reasons of the Superior. I prepared myself by asking fervently of God to grant me the assistance of his Spirit in this solemn moment, and to give me strength to speak with all sincerity and humility.

The sitting took place on December 28th, 1850. All the Brothers took their places in the Chapter. The Superior arrived ; all arose : he seated himself upon his throne ; all were seated. He opened the Holy Gospel of the Apostle Matt. chap. v. and read : *Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.* He explained that the *poor in spirit* are those who have their minds detached from earthly goods, who having only a book and a cross to call their own, attach themselves to these.

This being said, each Brother arose to give his opinion.

My turn came,—my heart beat violently—I prayed to God mentally. I rose, and said to the Father Super-

ior, that what he had said was the true sense of the passage, and that I had nothing to add. "Very well, my good child," said he. "Courage! I hope that you will respond to the good and noble sentiments of your family, and to those of the illustrious doctors who have had the good fortune to place you here."

These benevolent words emboldened me. "My reverend Father," I said, "I have doubts which burden my conscience; if you would relieve me of them, you would render me an eminent service."

The Father having pronounced the word "*Benedicite*," I went to cast myself down in the middle of the hall. He blessed me; making with his hand the sign of the cross, and added, "*Surge, in nomine Domini*." "In the name of the Lord, arise."

I arose; and very much agitated, I stammered out, rather than pronounced, some words of excuse—of respectful submission. Then I timidly declared my doubts on the subject of confession and absolution. I avowed to him that confession to the priest, seemed to me not a divine institution, forasmuch as I had never seen it ordered in the word of God, which had been written by the prophets and the holy apostles, and that Jesus Christ had not commanded men to confess. In the Old Testament, King David confessed his sins to God, who absolved him from them; and in the New Testament, St. James says, *Confess your faults one to another*, and not "Confess to the priest." Thus confession is free: one can do it to whom one will and when one will. Then I declared to him that my heart refused to believe in the absolution of the priest, because

he cannot see into the depths of the heart, and distinguish the hypocrite from the true penitent: that to God alone belongs the power and the right to remit sin, and that Holy Scripture says, Faith in Jesus Christ remits sins: so that one has no need of the absolution of the priest.

A profound and frightful silence succeeded my words. If a thunderbolt had fallen in the hall it would not have produced more astonishment and stupor. They looked at me aghast. I could not have believed that observations, so simple and so reasonable, could cause so great a stupefaction. For myself, I already felt relieved; my emotion was dispelled, and I turned my eyes towards the Superior.

Father Gabriel replied in an angry tone, that I did not know what I was saying.

Nothing daunted, I resumed speaking, and made my avowal upon the dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary, and upon the worship of Saints.

"My Reverend Father," I said, "I have always had for the Virgin the greatest veneration. Very often before entering the Convent, I prayed to her on my knees; and here, I have addressed to her my most fervent prayers, remaining for hours extended before her image; my forehead on the stone or with my arms crossed. I have scrupulously followed all your directions in this respect, reading with reverence her holy litanies, and believing, like our holy Church, in her perpetual virginity and in her power. Now I have fearful doubts respecting it, for I have read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, in the first chapter, these words, 'That she

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brought forth her *first born son* ;' and in another chapter, 'Behold, your mother and your brethren are without and ask for you.' If this is truly the word of God, written by his Holy Apostles, as you have told us, how can it be believed that she never ceased to be a virgin, and that she had not other children ?"

"You are damned !" said the Father in a voice of thunder.

This sentence made me start. One does not hear it without shuddering.—Above all, when it issues from the mouth of a Superior. Nevertheless, a stronger power reassured me. To be damned for having lent an ear to the Gospel of the God who saves, appeared to me a thing impossible. I appealed in my heart from the Father Gabriel who damned me, to the Celestial Father who would save me, and I felt myself fortified.

An energy, a little feverish, animated me, and I replied, "My Reverend Father, that my words irritate you, deeply afflicts me ; I come to implore your enlightenment for my errors, and I supplicate you not to damn me. It is not I, who have invented what I have been saying ; I have read it in the Word of God. Not only does that book teach that Mary had other children but it does *not* say, that it is necessary to render worship to her, or that she has the power to intercede. At Cana, when she wished to intercede, Jesus rebuked her saying : *Woman what is that to thee and me ?* Another time when they said to the Lord : '*Behold your Mother and your Brethren are without asking for you,*' the Lord refused to admit them into

his presence, but stretching his hand towards his disciples, he said : ' Behold my Mother and my Brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my Brother, my Sister, my Mother.' Is this not plainly declaring, that if we do the will of his Father, we are to him on an equality with his Mother and his brothers? How then can it be necessary to render worship to the Virgin ?"

"Moreover, I do not believe that we ought to worship Saint Joseph, our-Guardian Angel, or any Angel or any Saint. Besides, I have read in the 20th chapter of Exodus that the second commandment is, ' Thou shalt not make to thyself any shaped images, nor the resemblance of things, which are on high in the heaven, or below on the earth. Thou shalt not bow down before them and thou shalt not render to them any worship;' and it seems to me that we greatly violate the commandment of God when we make graven images, and the resemblances of beings who have lived on the earth—when we prostrate ourselves before them and render them worship."

I waited for a reply, but in vain. I looked about me to see if I could find some who would sympathize with me. Every eye was cast down and their countenances appeared as passive as marble. To the sullen murmur which ran through the stalls, whilst I was speaking, had succeeded a silence the most absolute. A frightful storm rumbled over my head. I was alone, like a being abandoned. I recommended myself to God.

*This silence, which they obstinately refrained from*

breaking, seemed to me to say, Is this all? It pressed upon me as an order to speak again. I spoke.

"My reverend Father, I must yet add, that I do not believe that Jesus Christ can be in body, in bone, and in divinity, in the host; since scripture says that he is ascended up into heaven, that he is seated at the right hand of God, and that the Apostle Peter declares that the heaven must contain him until the restitution of all things. The Lord is henceforward with us in spirit, and not in body and in bone."

"But," exclaimed the Father, "it is written in the Gospel of the Church, that Jesus said to his disciples, 'This is my body, this is my blood.'"

"That is perfectly true, my Father. Very often also I have repeated these words, in order to oppose them to those other declarations, and to penetrate myself with the sentiment that I have deceived myself. But I have never been able to arrive at this conclusion, because Jesus, after having said, *This is my blood*, adds, *I tell you you in truth, that I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine until the day in which I shall drink it now with you in the kingdom of my Father*; and from them it has always appeared to me that what he drank was the fruit of the vine, and not blood. Besides the Pope has certainly done very wrong in keeping the cup from the faithful, because it is directly contrary to the precept of the Lord, 'Drink ye all of it.'"

The reverend Father scowled upon me, but did not reply.

"I do not believe," said I, resuming, "that there can be a purgatory. I have read the Gospel again and

again; and in no part of it is it spoken of. How can Jesus, who, as our church teaches, descended into Limbo to deliver those who were there, wish to plunge us there anew? or rather, plunge us into a place more dreadful still—into a purgatory? The Apocalypse of St. John says, *Blessed from henceforth are those who die in the Lord*; and the thief who was converted upon the cross, went straight to Paradise. Will Jesus treat us worse than a brigand if we repent as he did? Moreover, I assert that the Gospel teaches that we are saved by faith, and that salvation is not gained by works; for if by works, who could be sufficiently holy to merit it?"

Upon this the Superior interrupted me abruptly, and said with a thundering voice and flashing eyes, that I was a *liar*.

"My reverend Father," I rejoined, "I do not lie. That is the sentiment of St. Paul; and St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, (lib. iii. chap. 8), says, "Love God through Jesus Christ, and do all you will.

"But it is also written," said Father Gabriel, "*Faith, without works, is dead.*"

"Yes, my Father, so Augustine adds, that when we love God we do not offend him. Moreover, St. Paul says, '*It is by grace we are saved through faith, and this comes not of ourselves, since it is the gift of God. It comes not of works, that no man may glorify himself.*'"

This last speech so roused the anger of the Reverend Gabriel, that he declared that none of these lies were found in the Gospel of the Church.

Indignant at this proceeding—desperate at seeing this Superior despise the word of God, and make no

answer to the avowals of a poor novice, but the most bitter and threatening words, I drew from the pocket of my cassock the Gospel of the Church,—that same volume out of which they read in the refectory, which I had heard, and afterwards had read for myself. It had staggered my faith, altered my views; it was right that it should be my defender, and reply for me. I opened it and read:—"It is by grace that we are saved, in virtue of faith, and it comes not of ourselves, since it is the gift of God. It comes not from our works, lest any one should glorify himself." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) I turned over the leaves and read again:—"For I say unto you, that I will drink no more henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." (Matt. xxvi. 29.) "And some one said, Behold thy mother and thy brethren are without and desire to see thee."

"What is that book?" asked the Superior, hastily interrupting me.

"It is the Gospel of God, my reverend Father."

"From whence have you taken this book, so pernicious and so fatal to the good man?" It was thus he designated the word of God.

I made no reply. Then, rising from his seat, he denounced upon me, with a tone of authority, the condemnation of God. "You are damned," he said to me; "I tell you, in truth, that if you return not to God, by the very holy Virgin, if you do not throw yourself at her feet, asking her pardon for all the outrages *that you have committed against her, as well as against religion, you are damned.*"

"I believe that I am saved, my reverend Father ; and whatever consideration I may have for you, I would rather obey God than man."

"You persist in your infidelity?"

"My reverend Father, I persist not in my infidelity, but in the fidelity that Christ has given me, to practise and to keep the Holy Gospel unto my last sigh, in order that having done all that I can to love my Saviour in this world, I may possess him in eternity."

"You are still more wicked and more insolent than Protestants the most erroneous. You shall receive sixty blows of discipline for your insolence."

He seated himself.

Sixty blows of discipline, for having read the word of God, and having believed it ! Sixty strokes of that whip of five cords, of which each one carries at the end five little bits of square lead, and of which one blow only, tears the flesh ! What a spiritual Father ! what a representative of St. Peter ! He knows not how to reply to the doubts of a poor monk. He tries not even to put them off or to overthrow them by mildness, but tears his body in order to convert him, and wounds him for the greater glory of God ! Oh ! Father Gabriel ! Sixty blows of discipline ! Do you wish, then, to kill me ?

I remained immoveable and resigned. I waited in silence.

The Reverend Gabriel made a sign with his hand by holding up two fingers. Two Brothers rose quickly from their stalls, and presented themselves to perform the office of executioner. They were Brother Paul and

Brother Nicholas. They came towards me. I made no resistance, but humbled myself under the hands of the Superior without allowing complaint or murmur to escape me. The Brothers take from me my cassock and strip me of my vestments. I fall on my knees.

Then they seize the fatal instrument and flog me. At the first two strokes my blood started. It was horrible torture. I wished to suffer in silence; I prayed to the Lord Jesus, who had been beaten with rods. But alas! I could not hold out against such suffering: each blow was so painful that I cried—I howled. The Father Superior gave the order to sing the 51st Psalm. All the Brothers, standing in their stalls, intoned the *Miserere mei Deus*, and thus drowned my cries in their singing. The Reverend Gabriel uniting his voice to this holy harmony—feasting himself with the sight of my tortures and with the sound of my shrieks.

When they had done striking me, I was lying upon the ground covered with blood. I could not move. Two of the Brothers (they were, if I mistake not, Brother Celestin and Brother Justin,) took me under the arms, raised me, and assisted me to my place. This spectacle had moved the assembly: astonishment and surprise had given place to consternation.

The punishment, however, was not ended. It was still too little for the satisfaction of the excellent Gabriel. He bade them fetch a shirt of hair-cloth to clothe me in.

Imagine then, dear readers, a shirt of such a fabric *that the ends of the horsehair should turn inwards and insert themselves into my open and bleeding wounds.*

Think what a dressing it was for my wounds. They brought this new instrument of torture, put it on me, with my cassock above, and conducted me to my cell.

I passed a night made horrible by the sufferings of the body, but with my heart full of peace. The anguish and the strugglings of my conscience had ceased. The more the Superior had repulsed and ill-treated me, the more I seemed to be drawn towards God. It was as if I had passed from the hands of the Father Gabriel into those of the Lord. I ceased not to repeat these words, "Happy are those who suffer persecution for righteousness, because the kingdom of Heaven is theirs;" and I understood this happiness. I felt calmed by it: my conscience was set free. I had discharged it by this public confession. I had nothing more upon my mind.

These thoughts were interrupted by incessant pains: the least movement revived the anguish of my wounds, by introducing into them the cruel horsehair. I wished to remain immovable, but it was impossible. I suffered everywhere, and could not retain an easy posture. I laid upon my face in order to spare my mangled flesh, and each respiration cost me a sharp pain. I did not sleep; I prayed much; I thought of all that had happened; and the truth shone more and more clearly before my eyes. I strengthened myself for the ill-treatment which might yet be in store for me by repeating these words, "Fear not them who take away the life of the body, and can do nothing more." Yes, I said, I will fear nothing.

I arose at 8 o'clock, and passed my time till noon in



the *chauffoir*.\* Then I went to the refectory, but my place was not where it had been—they had marked it behind the door. There, on my knees, before a block, I received, in a cracked plate, a little soup, a spoonful of vegetable, and four ounces of bread. To this they added some water in a little broken pot. When the repast was ended, the Brother who served, threw down the vessels out of which I had eaten, and broke them as things impure and defiled.

The Father Superior advanced towards the open door, holding in his hands a large copper vessel containing holy water. Then he stopped, and each Brother dipped the brush into the water, and sprinkled me in the form of the cross. By the time they had finished, my cassock ran down with water, I was quite soaked. This was repeated three days successively. My clothes dried upon me regularly twice a-day; and in order to make me feel my pain the more, they took from me the only covering of my bed. In the month of December, I laid upon my straw mattress without any other clothing than a damp cassock. More than once I have railed at the *holy water*. On the 31st December, at 10 o'clock in the morning, the Father Superior bade them take off my haircloth shirt, and they drew it from my body, to which it was glued, and gave me again my shirt of cloth.

From this day the exorcisms and the sprinklings ceased; but I still remained separated from the community, and, seated at the door of the refectory, I ate *what the Brothers were so obliging as to leave me.*

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\* A place in convents where they warm themselves.

## CHAPTER V.

### VISIT OF MONSEIGNEUR THE BISHOP—EXCOMMUNICATION.

A NEW trial awaited me. God in his mercy had granted me some days respite to collect my strength, and indeed I had great need of it.

On the 4th January, 1851, Monseigneur, the Bishop of Belley, came to celebrate mass in the monastery.

The Reverend Gabriel ordered me to follow Brother Francis, and place myself where he told me. I followed him, and he placed me near the choir on my knees. All the monks entered in procession, and treated me as one *possessed by the devil*, by exorcising me. The Father Superior, at their head, held the holy water vessel. Each Brother sprinkled my shoulders, passing behind me, and then went and seated himself in his stall.

The exorcism finished, they sang the Litany of the Saints, and instead of saying *Ora pro nobis*, (Pray for us), they said, *Ora pro eo* (Pray for him). Monseigneur began afterwards to chant a requiem, or mass for the dead. He had put on his black ornaments. When he was in the Gospel, he turned towards me, and calling me by my name, interrogated me concerning my faith.

“Brother Paul de Sainte Foi,” he said, “do you believe in God?”

“Yes, my Lord, I do believe in him.”

"Do you believe that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary—ever Virgin?"

"Sir, I believe that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, but I do not believe that Mary was always virgin; for this would be to make the Word of God to lie, since that says that she had other children."

"Do you believe in the Holy Church Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman?"

"Sir, I believe in the Holy Church of Jesus Christ, Catholic and Apostolic, but not Roman; because the Church of Rome has deviated far from the precepts of the Gospel."

At these words, the Bishop took the Book of Excommunication; fulminated against me the anathemas of the Church, and proceeded with the mass.

After the elevation of the cup, Monseigneur again turned towards me, and said in a solemn voice, "My Reverend Brother, Paul de Sainte Foi, do you believe that Jesus Christ is in body and in soul upon the altar?"

"Sir, I believe that Jesus Christ is *in heaven*, and not upon the altar."

He again opened the book, and excommunicated me from the Roman Church, dealing with me as Protestant, heretic, and damned.

Upon a signal and call by name from Father Gabriel, four monks—veritable *mutes*—approached me, and led me into the hall of St. John Baptist. These were the Brothers Lucien, Amadeus, Pierre, and Charles. There *they took from me my cassock, my shoes, and my stockings, leaving me only my drawers. They then*

put on me the *Cilice* and the *haire*, and throwing over me a large cloak whilst crossing the passage leading to the chapter, they shut me up in a dungeon.

At first I could perceive nothing ; but, by degrees, I was able to discern that I was in an arched vault about twelve feet square. An aperture in the wall, thickly set with bars, scarcely allowed the light to penetrate into this gloomy recess. I then distinguished a stone which might serve for a seat, whilst my feet might rest on a little old straw, damp and cold.

I took some steps in this horrible corner, but with great difficulty. The *cilice* wrung me. It is a waistcoat made of strong and thick cloth, set within with metal points, which impede every motion of the body and neck. This they bind about the body in such a manner that the points enter into the flesh ; and every time the chest heaves to draw breath, the pain is renewed. It tore slowly, and reopened all my wounds. Besides which the *haire*, that other machine for punishment, completed my torment. This consists of sleeves lined with long bands of iron, which confine the arms and legs so as to prevent their being folded.

In this extremity, I knew not whether I must henceforth account myself among the dead or the living. I felt that from man I had nothing more to hope, not even pity : and my heart turned solely towards the Eternal. It was without doubt to try my faith, that he permitted these wicked ones thus to torture me. I recalled to my mind the scene of the chapel, the questioning of the Bishop, and the sentence of excommunication which he had passed upon me. What occupied

water restored me to life. It lasted but a short time. I soon fell into the same lifeless state, and believed from that time that it was all over with me—that I must die in this place. This thought was pleasant to me, for I clung not to life. I recommended my soul to God; I asked His pardon for all the faults which I had committed, imploring grace in the name of my Saviour; presenting to him my griefs in testimony of the sincerity of my faith. I supplicated him to take me quickly. I ceased not to repeat—"Christ is my life, and death is my gain." I anticipated death.

God had decreed otherwise, and the hour of deliverance struck for me. The 7th of January, at 11 o'clock, the four mutes reappeared: they found me icy cold and without consciousness, on the straw. They aroused me, raised me up, and placed me upon my legs; and, after muffling me in a long cloak, they made me cross the chapter, supporting me under the arms: from thence they introduced me into a low hall, where they took away from me the *cilice* and the *haïre*.

I was happy in finding myself a little at liberty; but I trembled in all my limbs, and when I would have taken a step, I fell to the ground, reeling like one intoxicated, without power to raise myself again. The Brothers had the goodness to take me up and carry me in a folding chair into the next chamber. They gave me, afterwards, a small glass of I know not what liquor, which caused me to sleep until the next day in the evening.

I awoke, feeling broken and bruised. My chest and loins gave me severe pain. I remained some time with-

out knowing where I was ; for it was dark. However, a Brother came with a light. He shewed me some clothes upon a chair, telling me they were for my use : these were such as laymen wear—a shabby over-coat and a cap. My good shoes had been replaced by bad ones. The Brother had the kindness to assist me, and, thanks to him, I could take refuge near a stove.

From this time, I lived completely separated from the rest of the community. I was sequestered in a court where I could see nobody. I ate alone.

The desire of getting away from this confinement seized upon me. I expected from hour to hour, that the Superior would let me know his will, but as he delayed, I asked for him.

He came to see me on the 11th of January, in the morning. “ My Reverend Father,” I said, “ you know that I am excommunicated from the Roman Church,—that besides, I have no taste for the life of a monk, and consequently I should wish to go away.” “ I desire it also, heartily,” replied he, “ for if you remain, you will bring misfortune to the community.” Then he added, —“ Your papers ?—for I wish to take your name, and that of your country, in order to put you in the book of apostates from religion. You are certainly the chief among them.”

Upon this he ordered a Brother to accompany me to my cell, in order to take from thence my papers and my certificates. I took them to the Father. “ Very well,” was all the remark he made.

I felicitated myself with the prospect of deliverance. *But alas ! I was deceived.*

Two days after, as there was no reply, I asked for the Father Superior again. He came. I requested my papers, in order that I might depart. He answered me that I should never have them, and that he preferred burning them. Upon this he left me.

What was my surprise, when on the morning of the 16th, he made me re-enter the community! It is true that I did not mix with the Brothers—that I took my meals in a room apart—that nobody addressed a word to me, nor replied to my questions—and that I was laid under the ban as an obstinate heretic. But what design had they in recalling me amongst the Brothers? For what end retain my papers? Why would they not let me go away? Had not the Reverend Gabriel sufficiently tortured and punished me?

A thought struck me. He did not allow me to perish in the dungeon, I said, because the Brothers, seeing me disappear in that manner, would know that he had assassinated me; perhaps he wishes me to perish by a death which may seem natural. I recalled with alarm the recent history of a poor Brother, who for some fault was seized by the Superior, thrown upon the ground, and fifteen days afterwards died in the midst of horrible vomittings. Frightful suspicions seized hold of me—I resolved to flee. I thought at first to profit by a walk which the community took on the 16th of January, but I soon perceived that I was kept in sight, and besides my shoes were too large, and I should soon have been caught. I returned to the house. But the *same day*, in wandering through the premises, I discovered an outlet. It was a little concealed door, by

which the Brother Paul went to fetch pastry and confections for the Reverend Father Gabriel. It was not fastened. I waited for the darkness of night, and at ten o'clock, when the Brothers went to meditation, I took my departure. I fled, running, and it was well that I did so. The Brother Augustus, whom I met some time afterwards, told me, that at that same meditation they perceived that I was missing. All the Brothers were then spread through the house to search for me. Brother Jeremy found and brought to the Superior a little note, in which I had disclosed the fact of my departure; and the Brother Seraphin discovered that the little door near the pantry was open. The Reverend Gabriel became furious. He ordered eight of the swiftest and most vigorous to exchange their cassocks for blouses, and pursue me.

It was in vain. They took the road to Lyons, whilst I had taken that to Geneva. I ran like one possessed for several hours; then I slackened my pace. I began to feel and to taste the free air of the country. I was outside that place of malediction. I could not sufficiently bless God, and besought him to preserve me from my enemies. He granted my request; for the next day I arrived in the hospitable city of Calvin, where a pastor, touched by my evident destitution, and the persecutions which I had experienced, took pity on my suffering condition, comforted me in my trouble, and confirmed me in the faith.

Behold! what has taken place in France in 1851. The facts speak for themselves so loudly, that it is not necessary for me to add any reflections.



This episode of my life will be of use, without doubt, to others. It will teach them to keep guard against the fanaticism and the wickedness of monks; and to confide to more worthy hands, what they hold dearest in the world,—the education of their children, the direction of their conscience, and the salvation of their souls. If the doubts which assailed me, arise in their hearts, let them be directed and led by the Word of God. It will make them know the Lord Jesus, the true Mediator, the only Saviour of our souls. They will learn of HIM, who is humble of heart, that His yoke is easy, whilst that of the priests is heavy and rough. They will know peace in the realization of this promise:—*If you will persevere in my doctrine you shall be truly my disciples; you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* (John viii. 30.)

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